JFK Assassination System
Identification Form

Date: 3/6/2018

Agency Information

AGENCY : LBJ
RECORD NUMBER : 177-10002-10105

RECORD SERIES : NSF, CF, USSR, VOL. 21, BOX 226

AGENCY FILE NUMBER :

Document Information

ORIGINATOR : CIA
FROM :
TO :

TITLE : SPECIAL REPORT--WEEKLY REVIEW

DATE : 09/13/1968
PAGES : 11

SUBJECTS :
INTELLIGENCE REPORT

DOCUMENT TYPE : PAPER, TEXTUAL DOCUMENT
CLASSIFICATION : Top Secret
RESTRICTIONS : Consulted; Mandatory Review Material
CURRENT STATUS : Redact
DATE OF LAST REVIEW : 07/06/1994

OPENING CRITERIA :

COMMENTS : DOC. #57

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CONTROL NO. SC No. 00787/68B [B]

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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

The Developing Soviet Submarine Force

Special Report
WEEKLY REVIEW

Top Secret

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13 September 1968
SC No.00787/68B

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THE DEVELOPING SOVIET SUBMARINE FORCE

The Soviet naval leadership, commanding the world's largest submarine fleet, is undertaking a program to increase the operational capabilities of the force. Four new classes of submarines—three torpedo-attack classes and a new Polaris-type missile-firing submarine—are in production, and several older classes are being improved and reconditioned. In addition, since the early 1960s the range, number, and duration of open ocean patrols by Soviet submarines have been generally increasing.

Fleet Modernization

The new Polaris-type submarine--designated the Y-class--carries 16 SS-N-6 ballistic missiles with ranges of some 1,500 miles. These 425-foot-long submarines are currently being built at Severodvinsk in the Soviet Northern Fleet area. The first units should be operational soon and 40 or more could be in service by the mid-1970s.

Two new classes of nuclear-powered attack submarines are also being built--one at Leningrad shipyard and the other at Gorkiy. At least one of these classes probably was specifically designed to engage enemy submarines. A third class of attack submarine is under construction in the Soviet Far East; its means of propulsion is not yet known.

In addition to these new construction programs, the Soviets are reconditioning many of their older classes of submarines. There are no indications that the Soviets intend to introduce a new class of cruise-missile submarine, however, and construction of these submarines is apparently ending as the Soviets approach their desired force level for these anticarrier units.

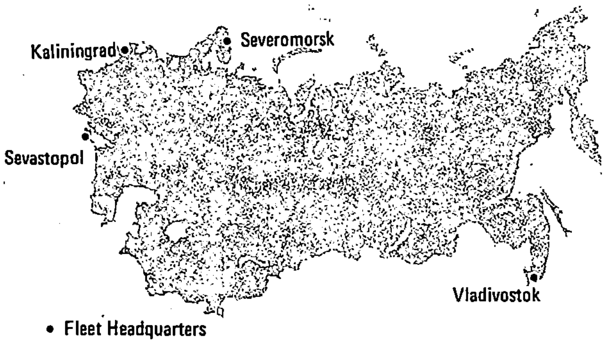
Operational Implications

Strategic targets in the middle of the US are beyond reach of the 650-mile SS-N-5 carried on the older ballistic-missile submarines, but are within range of the SS-N-6 carried on the Y-class. By the mid-1970s, Soviet ballistic-missile submarines may present a strategic threat comparable to that of the US Polaris fleet and be able to operate with less risk of detection than earlier classes of Soviet missile submarines.

The introduction of the new classes of attack submarines suggests that the Soviets are attempting to come to grips with the Polaris threat. The Soviets apparently are counting on their submarines to help blunt that threat by attempting to destroy Polaris submarines before they can launch their missiles.

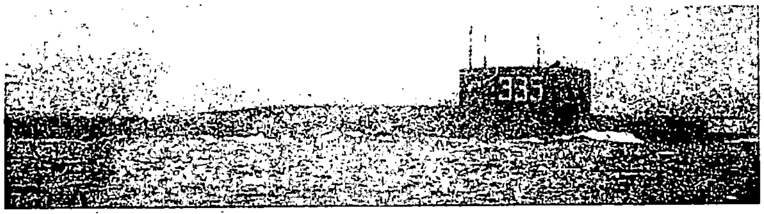
Soviet ballistic-missile submarines frequently patrol within range of US Polaris bases and could destroy a number of Polaris submarines by attacking these bases. The new Soviet attack submarines may be able to locate and destroy a few Polaris submarines in confined waters through which those submarines frequently must pass, such as the Irish Sea or the Sicilian Straits. Combined operations with new Soviet surface ships, such as the Moskva-class helicopter carriers and Kresta- and Kashin-class guided-missile ships, will provide some antisubmarine capability in the ocean approaches

The Soviet Submarine Force



	Northern Fleet	Baltic Fleet	Black Sea Fleet	Pacific Fleet
Nuclear-powered				
Ballistic missile	9	0	0	1
Cruise missile	16	0	0	17
Attack	14	0	0	4
Diesel-powered				
Ballistic missile	18	1	1	8
Cruise missile	11	3	5	6
Attack	91	64	32	65

BALLISTIC MISSILE SUBMARINES



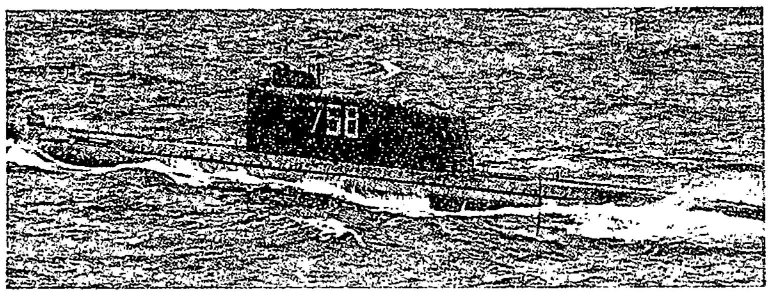
Y-CLASS

Nuclear powered
Carries 16 SS-N-6 missiles in hull
425 feet long
Now being deployed



H-CLASS

Nuclear powered
Carries three SS-N-4 or SS-N-5 missiles in sail
380 feet long
9 in service



G-CLASS

Diesel powered
Carries three SS-N-4 or SS-N-5 missiles in sail
320 feet long
22 in service



Z-CONVERSION CLASS

Diesel powered
Carries two SS-N-4 missiles in sail
295 feet long
6 in service

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CLASSES OF SOVIET SUBMARINES

Nuclear Powered		Diesel Powered	
Ballistic Missile	Y	Ballistic Missile	G
	H		Z Conversion
Cruise Missile	E-1	Cruise Missile	J
	E-11		W Conversion
Attack	N	Attack	F
	V		Z
	C		R
One New Class "B"			W

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to the USSR and in the Mediterranean.

Deployment Patterns

Soviet submarines are assigned to each of the four fleets--Northern, Pacific, Baltic, and Black Sea. Because of the restricted exits from the Baltic and Black Seas, however, most of the missile-equipped units and all of the nuclear-powered units are based in ice-free ports of the Kola Peninsula (Northern Fleet) and in the Pacific Fleet.

The Soviets are apparently trying to reduce the disproportion between the two major fleets--the Northern and the Pacific. Although the Northern Fleet still holds the favored position, several nuclear submarines have been transferred under the polar ice to the Pacific and a number of modern diesel units have joined the Northern Sea Route convoy in past summers.

The Baltic Fleet is responsible for protecting Soviet coastal waters and for furnishing diesel submarines for patrols off the US Polaris base at Holy Loch. Moscow has also begun sending Baltic Fleet submarines to the Mediterranean to take some of the strain off the Northern Fleet, which has been furnishing most of the units operating there. There are no nuclear submarines in the Baltic, and the few cruise-missile units there operate in coastal waters.

The Montreux Convention of 1936 places severe limitations on the passage of Soviet submarines through the Turkish Straits. Black Sea - based submarines can pass into the Mediterranean only if they are headed for another fleet area for repairs. For this reason, only older diesel units are based in the Black Sea. Once in the Mediterranean, however, these units operate there for about 60 days on their way to and from Baltic shipyards.

Patrol Activity

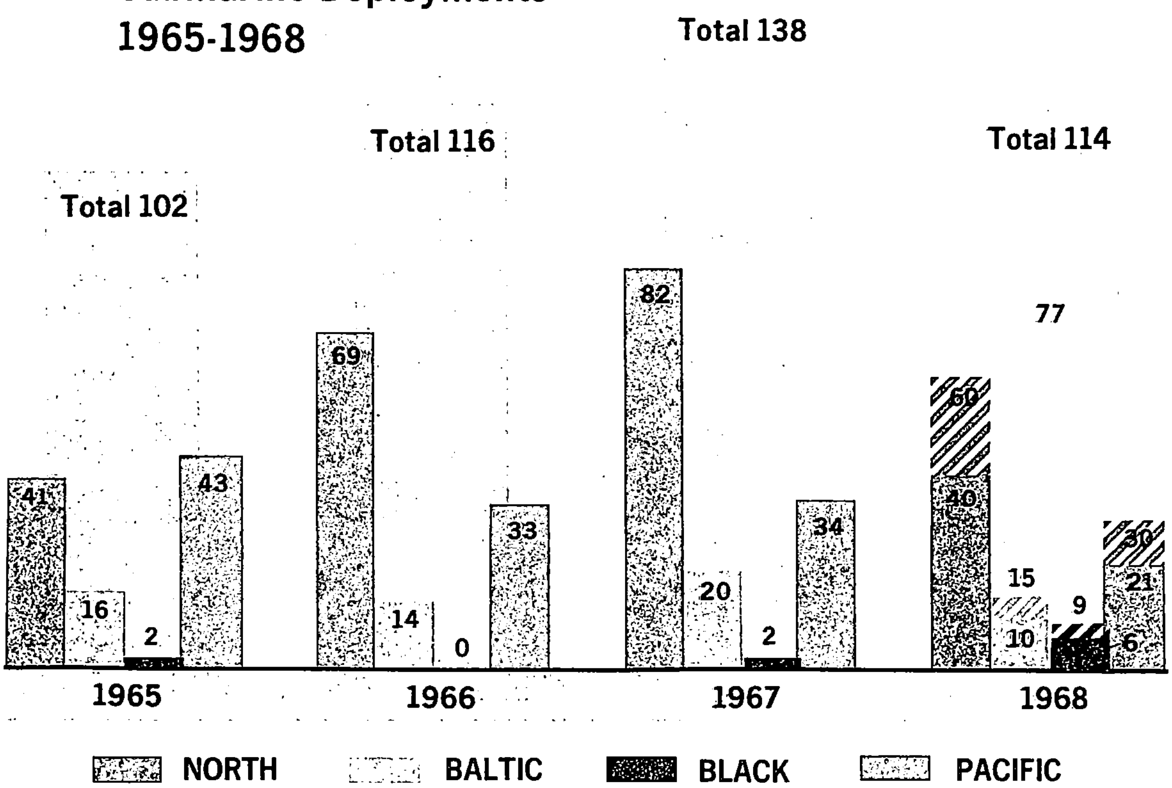
Most of the increase in the level of Soviet submarine operations during the past year is attributable to the stationing of a force of six to ten submarines--mostly diesel attack units--in the Mediterranean since

June 1967; at least one nuclear unit is usually included in the force. There was an overall increase of nearly 20 percent in the number of Soviet submarine patrols beyond local fleet operating areas in 1967, but if the trend noted so far this year continues, fewer submarines will deploy in 1968. Patrols this year have been of longer duration, however, thereby resulting in more submarine time at sea.

No confirmed patrols by H-class ballistic-missile units have been noted since late 1966, and there have been periods during the past year when no Soviet ballistic-missile submarines have been on patrol in either the Atlantic or Pacific. The G-class is the only such submarine now being used for mid-ocean patrols.

Conversion and overhaul of first-generation ballistic-

Soviet Submarine Deployments 1965-1968



Number of deployed units, not including routine interfleet transfers or fleet exercise participants.

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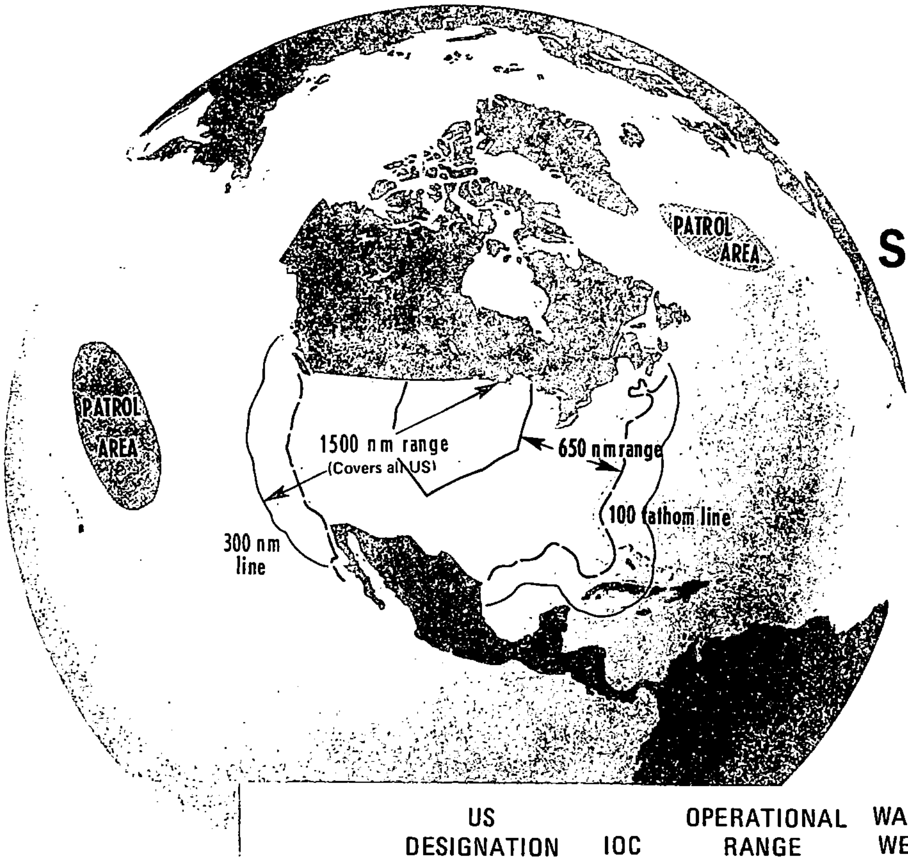
missile submarines and the reassignment of their crews to new Y-class units have probably been at least partly responsible for the decline in ballistic-missile submarine activity. In addition, the loss of a G-class submarine in the Pacific in mid-March apparently resulted in a three-month standdown in patrols by these units. That incident probably caused the Soviets to implement new safety measures. Moreover, as the Soviets prepare to deploy new Y-class submarines, they may be reassessing the military value of sending their diesel-powered units into the mid-Atlantic and mid-Pacific patrol areas.

Until mid-1967, E-class cruise-missile submarines conducted regular patrols in the Atlantic. Since June 1967, patrol activity in the Atlantic has diminished; however, a series of single E-class units has been almost continuously present in the Mediterranean. Some of the submarines on recent patrols have also engaged in other activities such as hydroacoustic research and support of naval training maneuvers. J-class diesel-powered cruise-missile submarines apparently have been used primarily for peripheral defense. In late 1966, the first of these units to venture into the Mediterranean broke down and limped back to its base in the Northern Fleet. Some of the older W-class units are equipped to launch cruise missiles, but these, too, operate only near Soviet shores and probably are being retired from service.

Recent patrols by diesel attack submarines in the Mediterranean have been extended to as long as six months through the use of Arab and Yugoslav ports for upkeep, reprovisioning, and crew recreation. Previous patrols by Soviet submarines in the Mediterranean had lasted less than two months.

Last year, a submarine support group operated for nearly six months off the west coast of Africa in a program to study the feasibility of submarine operations from a floating base. The group consisted of a submarine tender and a missile supply ship, and was assisted briefly by a survey vessel and two intelligence collection ships. Several other ships provided logistic support. Four submarines participated in the group's operations. One of these--a nuclear-powered unit--was away from home waters for more than six months.

Once the new ballistic-missile submarines go on patrol, the Soviets may make greater use of such floating support bases on the high seas. Floating base ships would be vulnerable in



Soviet Submarine-Launched Missiles

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	US DESIGNATION	IOC	OPERATIONAL RANGE	WARHEAD WEIGHT	REMARKS
CRUISE MISSILE	SS-N-3	1961	250 NM	1,000-2,000 lbs.	Carried by E-I and E-II-class nuclear submarines and by J-class diesel units. A few W-class diesel torpedo attack submarines were modified to carry this missile. Surface launched.
BALLISTIC MISSILES	SS-N-4	1960	300 NM	About 2,200 lbs	Carried by most G-class diesel submarines and by some H-class nuclear units. A few Z-class diesel torpedo attack submarines were modified to carry this missile. Surface launched.
	SS-N-5	1963	650 NM	1,600-2,400 lbs	Carried by most H-class nuclear submarines and by some G-class diesel units. Underwater launched.
	SS-N-6	Probably 1968	1,500 NM	700-1,700 lbs	Probably intended for the new Y-class nuclear submarines. These 16-tube Polaris-type units first went into service in mid-1968.

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wartime, but ballistic-missile submarines operating from such bases south of the Azores, for example, could remain on-station off the US coast longer than could units deployed from the Kola area. Cruise-missile and attack submarines would also profit from mid-ocean bases, reducing the number of long transits to and from patrol areas.

The USSR recently has achieved several technological advances in submarine support. New and more powerful radio transmitters serving submarines on distant patrols are now in operation in the USSR. A navigation satellite system currently being tested may permit Soviet submarines to determine their positions with greater accuracy even in the most unfavorable weather and sea conditions. Hydroacoustic research ships have conducted surveys in the past few years in areas of the Atlantic and Pacific where the Soviets might hope to detect Polaris submarines and in the Canary Island Basin and Philippine Sea where they may intend to operate their own submarines. (TOP SECRET TRINE NO FOREIGN DISSEM EXCEPT UK AND CANADA)

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COMMENTS : DOC. #57